United Nations A/52/6 (Sect. 24)

General Assembly
Fifty-second session

9 May 1997

Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999*

Part VI Human rights and humanitarian affairs

Section 24
Palestine refugees
(Programme 22 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001)

Contents

	Page
Overview	1
Programme of work	4

* The present document contains section 24 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. The complete proposed programme budget will subsequently be issued in final printed form as *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 6* (A/52/6/Rev.1).

97-12268 (E) 160597 200597

Section 24
Palestine refugees
(Programme 22 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001)

Overview

24.1 The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established by the General Assembly by resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949 as a separate entity within the United Nations system; its present mandate is extended until June 1999. By its resolution 3331 B (XXIX) of 17 December 1974, the General Assembly decided that the expenses relating to the emoluments of international staff in the service of UNRWA, which would otherwise have been charged to voluntary contributions, should be provided for under the regular budget of the United Nations with effect from 1 January 1975 for the duration of the Agency's mandate. In view of the extension of the Agency's mandate, and since no political settlement had been reached in respect of the Palestine refugees at the time of the preparation of these budget estimates, it has been assumed that the programme will be continued during the biennium 1998-1999.

24.2 The overall strategy of UNRWA for the coming biennium is to continue to provide the assistance it has rendered for some 50 years until there is a final resolution to the issue of the Palestine refugees. That assistance involves the provision of essential education, health and relief and social services to eligible Palestine refugees living in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The ability of the Agency to provide that assistance is entirely dependent on sufficient voluntarily contributed funds being made available to it annually. In addition, with the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, the Agency embarked upon a process of harmonizing its planning and servicing functions in preparation for an eventual transfer in the future.

24.3 The implementation of the overall strategy will involve the provision of:

(a) *Education services*, to meet the basic educational and training needs of Palestine refugees and to enhance their educational and employment opportunities;

(b) *Health services*, to meet the refugees' basic health needs and to improve their overall state of health;

(c) *Relief and social services*, to provide the neediest refugees with assistance in maintaining a reasonable standard of existence and in improving their capacity to become more self-reliant, thereby reducing their dependence on such assistance, and to develop social programmes for women, youth, the disabled and other groups.

24.4 The Peace Implementation Programme, which was launched by UNRWA in 1993 shortly after the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and following consultations with the Palestinian leadership, the major donors of UNRWA and host Governments, has attracted generous funding from donors. The aim was to make the results of the peace process felt at the local level through a wide-ranging investment programme to develop infrastructure, improve living conditions and create employment opportunities. To ensure that the tangible benefits of peace were distributed throughout the refugee community, UNRWA emphasized the importance of projects in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as in the Palestinian self-rule areas of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

24.5 The total amount of pledges and contributions received under the two phases of the Peace Implementation Programme by the end of 1996 was $210.5 million. Implementation of funded projects will continue into the biennium.

24.6 In accordance with General Assembly resolution 302 (IV), UNESCO and WHO have entered into agreements with UNRWA under the terms of which those organizations assumed responsibility for the technical aspects of the Agency's education and health subprogrammes. UNESCO makes available the services of the UNRWA Director of Education, as well as three other international specialists, and WHO provides the Director of Health and one other international specialist on a non-reimbursable basis. The Agency currently employs a total of 79 extrabudgetary international staff under all sources, and some 22,000 locally recruited staff, all of whom are paid out of the voluntary contributions at its disposal for operational activities.

Table 24.1 **Summary of requirements by programme**
(Thousands of United States dollars)

(1) *Regular budget*

Programme	*1994-1995 expenditures*	*1996-1997 appropriations*	*Resource growth*		*Total before recosting*	*Recosting*	*1998-1999 estimates*
			Amount	*Percentage*			
Palestine refugees	21 343.2	17 304.9	240.9	1.3	17 545.8	1 829.2	19 375.0
Total	**21 343.2**	**17 304.9**	**240.9**	**1.3**	**17 545.8**	**1 829.2**	**19 375.0**

(2) *Extrabudgetary resources*

1994-1995 expenditures	*1996-1997 estimates*	*Source of funds*	*1998-1999 estimates*
—	—	(a) Services in support of: (i) United Nations organizations (ii) Extrabudgetary activities	—
—	—	(b) Substantive activities	—
678 637.0	808 614.0	(c) Operational projects	843 900.0
678 637.0	**808 614.0**		**843 900.0**
699 980.2	**825 918.9**		**863 275.0**

Table 24.2 **Summary by object of expenditure**
(Thousands of United States dollars)

(1) *Regular budget*

Object of expenditure	*1994-1995 expenditures*	*1996-1997 appropriations*	*Resource growth*		*Total before recosting*	*Recosting*	*1998-1999 estimates*
			Amount	*Percentage*			
Posts	21 322.5	17 282.3	240.9	1.3	17 523.2	1 827.9	19 351.1
Other staff costs	20.7	22.6	—	—	22.6	1.3	23.9
Total	**21 343.2**	**17 304.9**	**240.9**	**1.3**	**17 545.8**	**1 829.2**	**19 375.0**

(2) *Extrabudgetary resources*

1994-1995 expenditures	*1996-1997 estimates*	*Object of expenditure*	*1998-1999 estimates*
396 421.0	461 750.0	Posts	481 900.0
8 990.0	8 811.0	Other staff costs	9 196.0
11 418.0	9 452.0	Consultants and experts	9 864.0
3 309.0	3 492.0	Travel	3 644.0
21 007.0	26 048.0	Contractual services	27 185.0
96 971.0	105 182.0	Supplies and materials	109 772.0
19 549.0	21 804.0	Furniture and equipment	22 756.0
24 761.0	31 426.0	Grants and contributions	32 797.0
77 548.0	69 922.0	Improvements	72 973.0
18 663.0	70 727.0	Other	73 813.0
678 637.0	**808 614.0**	**Total**	**843 900.0**
699 980.2	**825 918.9**	**Total (1) and (2)**	**863 275.0**

Table 24. 3 **Post requirements**

Programme: Palestine refugees

	Established posts		*Temporary posts*					
	Regular budget		*Regular budget*		*Extrabudgetary resources*		*Total*	
	1996-1997	*1998-1999*	*1996-1997*	*1998-1999*	*1996-1997* [a]	*1998-1999*	*1996-1997*	*1998-1999*
Professional category and above								
USG	1	1	—	—	—	—	1	1
ASG	1	1	—	—	—	—	1	1
D-2	1	1	—	—	3	3	4	4
D-1	10	10	—	—	—	—	10	10
P-5	16	15	—	—	11	11	27	26
P-4/3	51	45	—	—	41	34	92	79
P-2/1	2	2	—	—	17	6	19	8
Total	**82**	**75**	**—**	**—**	**72**	**54**	**154**	**129**
General Service category								
Other levels	10	9	—	—	7	6	17	15
Total	**10**	**9**	**—**	**—**	**7**	**6**	**17**	**15**
Grand total	**92**	**84**	**—**	**—**	**79**	**60**	**171**	**144**

[a] Included are 6 posts funded by UNESCO (4) and WHO (2) and 19 posts needed to facilitate the move of UNRWA from Vienna to Gaza. These 19 posts will be abolished by mid-1997.

Programme of work

24.7 The activities of UNRWA correspond to programme 22, Palestine refugees, of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 (A/51/6/Rev.1). In view of the nature of the Agency's programme, no designation of priority was made within the programme.

Activities

24.8 During the biennium the following activities will be undertaken:

1. Education

24.9 The Agency's education services will continue to provide general, teacher and vocational/technical education for Palestine refugee children in accordance with their needs, identity and cultural heritage and consistent with UNESCO standards. The Agency will continue its efforts to improve the quality of teaching, training and staff development and to rely on UNESCO for technical expertise and support. Major planned actions are directed at meeting the natural growth in the school population by providing the necessary school facilities and teaching staff, and improving the quality of teaching, training, physical and human resources as well as the level of staff competence.

(a) *General education.* The Agency currently provides elementary and preparatory-level education to some 436,169 eligible refugee children at 643 UNRWA schools. The number of pupils is expected to grow by 2.8 per cent per annum to some 473,842 children by the end of the biennium as a result of natural growth in the Palestine refugee community;

(b) *Vocational and professional training*. The Agency currently provides 4,666 vocational, technical and teacher-training places in 8 training centres where 48 trade, technical and semi-professional courses are offered. The training curriculum is regularly refined and updated to conform to local labour market demand. The number of places at the training centres is expected to grow to about 5,000 by the end of the biennium, if sufficient special contributions are forthcoming for the establishment of planned new vocational and technical courses. To meet the requirement of the Government of Jordan and the Palestinian Authority that teachers in the basic education cycle possess four-year diplomas, the Agency currently offers pre-service and in-service teacher training leading to a first-level university degree at its training centres in Jordan and the West Bank, where 1,500 training places are offered. The Agency also provides regular in-service training to teachers and other education staff and currently around 1,000 university scholarships per annum to eligible refugee children; no change is anticipated in this output during the biennium if external funding continues to be received for the purpose.

2. Health services

24.10 UNRWA health care activities must evolve to address changes in the demographic patterns and social conditions of the Palestine refugee population. Current planning calls for upgrading and expanding diagnostic and treatment facilities related to secondary care, with an emphasis on reducing morbidity and infant and maternal mortality, and addressing the health care needs of an ageing refugee population. The foundation of UNRWA health care activities remains its network of 124 primary health care facilities. Ways will be sought to overcome financial constraints, which have prevented the Agency from undertaking maintenance and emergency upkeep of the facilities or building badly needed new clinics. Harmonization of the Agency's health policies and services with those of the Palestinian Authority and rehabilitation and construction of essential health care infrastructure in the Palestinian self-rule areas is also a priority. With funds contributed mainly by the European Union and its member States, the Agency is currently completing construction of and equipping a 232-bed hospital in the Gaza Strip that will eventually be taken over by the Palestinian Authority and integrated into its health care system. UNRWA has also completed the construction of a college of nursing affiliated with the European Gaza Hospital and is establishing public health laboratories in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority.

(a) *Medical care services*. UNRWA offers comprehensive primary health care to some 3.3 million eligible refugees through a network of 87 health centres, 23 health points and 14 maternal and child health clinics, which currently record some 6.5 million patient visits a year. Special care for non-communicable diseases, including diabetes and hypertension, and dental care services are integrated into the activities of health centres. Specialist care in paediatrics, obstetrics and gynaecology, cardiology and ophthalmology, as well as the treatment of chest diseases and ear, nose and throat illnesses is an integral part of primary health care activities. Currently, family-planning services are available at 120 of the Agency's health facilities. In addition to services provided at an UNRWA-run hospital at Kalkiliya in the West Bank, the Agency provides secondary care through financial support towards hospitalization of refugee patients. The Agency's health programme also provides food assistance to the most vulnerable population groups, including children below two years of age, pregnant women and nursing mothers. Health education and promotion are core elements of the programme. Current initiatives, aimed at promoting healthy life styles among the refugee population, are focused on young people and women;

(b) *Environmental health services*. Basic environmental health services, including sewage disposal, management of storm-water run-off, provision of safe drinking water, collection and disposal of refuse and control of rodents and insects, are currently being provided to some 1.0 million registered refugees living in camps. The number of registered camp dwellers is expected to grow by 3.5 per cent per annum to 1.2 million by the end of the biennium. In recognition of the fact that improvement of environmental health conditions in refugee camps is crucial not only to reducing

health risks but also to socio-economic development, UNRWA places special emphasis on planning and implementing capital projects to improve the infrastructure for water, sewerage and drainage and solid waste management, especially in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon.

3. Relief and social services

24.11 The relief and social services programme will continue to support the most disadvantaged of the Palestine refugees to facilitate their social and economic self-reliance and development. This will be achieved through short-term direct relief for the destitute and longer-term developmental social welfare programmes. The latter include poverty alleviation and income-generation schemes (skill-training and enterprise support) targeted especially at women, unemployed youth, disabled persons and others who would otherwise have difficulty in securing access to work and an income. A key strategy in the biennium 1998-1999 will be the strengthening of the community's own mechanisms for tackling these issues, through technical and financial support in particular to community-based projects for women and the rehabilitation and integration of disabled persons. Professional training of staff in developmental social welfare concepts and techniques will be an essential complement, taking further the shift in their role from provider to facilitator begun in previous bienniums.

(a) *Relief services*. Direct material and financial assistance is provided to those refugee families without an adult male medically fit to earn an income and without other identifiable means of meeting basic needs. In emergencies, this assistance is extended to affected communities, refugee and non-refugee, as a temporary relief measure. Currently some 179,178 refugees, or 5.4 per cent of the population, are receiving assistance under the "special hardship case" programme. The aim of this programme is to ensure minimum standards of nutrition and shelter, and to intervene with cash grants in a particular family crisis. The highest proportions of special hardship cases among the refugee population are found in Lebanon (10.3 per cent) and Gaza (8.4 per cent). The number of special hardship cases is expected to grow by an average of 3.5 per cent per annum, to some 199,000, by the end of the biennium;

(b) *Social services*. All registered refugees are in principle eligible to benefit from the social services programmes for which they feel a need. In practice, the target group is about 10 per cent of the total registered refugee population, which currently stands at some 3.3 million and is expected to grow by 3.5 per cent per annum to some 3.7 million by the end of the biennium. Technical and financial support is given for skills training and support for income-generating enterprises (via grants and soft loans); rehabilitation of disabled persons; community development projects; women's literacy, legal awareness and other developmental programmes; and youth activities and leadership training. Social counselling is also given individually and in groups where indicated, as an additional support to clients of those programmes.

4. Income generation

24.12 Separate from the income-generation activities carried out under the poverty alleviation programme which seeks to assist destitute refugee families to become self-reliant, the Agency has since 1991 been active in setting up a variety of revolving funds to establish new enterprises, create jobs in the local economy and develop the capacity of women entrepreneurs, in particular in the Gaza Strip. Over the past five years, the Agency has provided over 4,500 business loans valued at just over $11 million, which have created nearly 1,500 new jobs and strengthened an additional 7,000 jobs. With an overall loan recovery rate of 99 per cent and a capital base of $7.6 million, the Agency's small-scale enterprise programme in Gaza is the most successful of its kind and is expected to be fully self-sustaining by the end of 1997, when it will be able to stand alone as a non-profit development finance institution. With ongoing economic stagnation in the region, there is a huge demand for micro-enterprise credit, particularly for working-capital loans that can serve some short-term development needs in the Palestinian economy. The Agency is seeking additional contributions from donors to expand its activities in this area.

Resource requirements (at current rates)

Posts

24.13 The estimated requirements of $17,523,200 would provide for 84 posts instead of the existing 92. The resource growth of $240,900 represents the combined effect of the application of new standardized vacancy rates offset in part by the effect of the abolition of eight posts.

Other staff costs

24.14 Estimated requirements of $22,600 would provide for general temporary assistance for secretariat services rendered to UNRWA officials while in New York attending the General Assembly and on other official business.